News Release

Contact:
Gerald Rogers, USACE, (757) 201-7606
Paul J. Carroll, EDA, (540) 635-2182
Bonnie Gross, EPA, (215) 814-3229
Tom Modena, VDEQ, (804) 698-4883
Marguerite J. Carpenter, FMC, (215) 299-6210

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 12, 2005
#05-16

USACE set to implode Avtex Fibers boiler house

Event marks milestone in cleanup of storied former industrial site

FRONT ROYAL, Va. – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District (USACE), will implode the former Avtex Fibers plant's boiler house, the largest remaining structure on the 440-acre EPA Superfund site in Front Royal, Sept. 19. Ceremony will begin at 2 p.m., followed by the implosion at 3 p.m.

The boiler house implosion ceremony is open to the public and will take place adjacent to the former Avtex Fibers Administration Building at 400 Kendrick Lane, Front Royal.

The boiler house is part of a massive three-building complex that includes the power house and compressor room. After the boiler house implosion, USACE contractors will demolish the remaining two buildings using conventional track hoe methods.

The implosion will mark a historic milestone in the years-long effort to address environmental contamination at the site, located in the scenic foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and prepare it for redevelopment as a 165-acre technology-oriented business park, 240-acre nature conservancy park, and 35-acre community soccer complex.

The boiler house once powered the world's largest rayon manufacturing plant, which employed thousands of workers during World War II and operated until 1989. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill worked with the British-owned American Viscose Company to build the plant to supply reinforced rayon cord to strengthen vehicle and airplane tires, a vital war material. Later, the plant also supplied carbonizable rayon for NASA's space shuttle and the Department of Defense.

Earlier this year, USACE joined the Front Royal-Warren County Economic Development Authority (EDA), which owns the entire Superfund site, at its open house to celebrate EDA's plans to redevelop 165 acres of Avtex property into a business park known as *Royal Phoenix*.

EDA's *Royal Phoenix* redevelopment will focus on innovative technology and hospitality as its core uses, said EDA Executive Director Paul J. Carroll. "Our plan shows that the site can accommodate nearly one million square feet of buildings, such as office and flexible technology buildings to support the innovative technologies in manufacturing," Carroll continued. "Also, our plan calls for several tourism-related activities, such as an outdoor recreation specialty retailer; a 200-room hotel and conference center; a culinary and wine institute; and even an artisan center and other educational venues."

The first company of *Royal Phoenix* is EZ-Filer Systems, LLC, an innovative Virginia company revolutionizing the delivery of public sector services in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Using the latest information services and data technologies, EZ-Filer Systems, LLC has modernized workflow processes in social services at local and state government level.

"We are honored to be a part of *Royal Phoenix*," said Robert C. Luse Jr., EZ Filer founder and president. "It's an example of how the public and private sector, working together, can achieve excellence. Our clean, revolutionary way of doing business in the global economy is the benchmark for companies to be housed at *Royal Phoenix*."

The Shenandoah Center for Heritage and the Environment (SCHE), created through agreements between USACE, EDA and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, will also be located on the *Royal Phoenix* site. SCHE will house a museum and archive documenting the unique history of the property and its role in the prosperity of the region. The center will also sponsor educational and research programs.

A 30-acre portion of the site is ready for commercial redevelopment, and another 70 acres is anticipated to be ready by the end of 2006, with the balance of the site completed in subsequent years, Carroll said. The soccer complex is scheduled to open in spring 2006, and the nature conservancy park will be developed over the next several years.

Other partners joining USACE and EDA to celebrate the significance of the boiler house implosion are the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which is the lead agency managing the EPA Superfund site cleanup, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) and the FMC Corporation, responsible for Superfund-related cleanup.

"The former Avtex Fibers operation is one of the largest and most significant Superfund sites now being readied for redevelopment," said Donald S. Welsh, Regional EPA administrator for the Mid-Atlantic States. "The reclamation of this site and the cooperation of the public and private sectors set the stage for a timely redevelopment that reflects the future in business opportunities, open green space and quality of life for Virginia, Warren County and Front Royal."

"Since 2000, the Norfolk District team has successfully partnered in the Avtex cleanup efforts with the EPA, VDEQ, EDA and FMC," said Col. Yvonne J. Prettyman-Beck, Norfolk District Commander and Engineer. "Now well into the Corps' final cleanup phase, reaching this significant project milestone is a testament to our combined team spirit and shared goal to safely and efficiently restore this site for future economical and ecological use."

Dignitaries invited to speak at the ceremony include: Virginia U.S. Senators John Warner and George Allen; Congressman Frank Wolf (R-10th District); Virginia Governor Mark Warner, Front Royal Mayor James M. Eastham; Norfolk District Commander and Engineer, Col. Yvonne J. Prettyman-Beck; U.S. EPA Region III, Regional Administrator, Donald S. Welsh; and FMC Corporation Senior Vice President W. Kim Foster.

The Avtex Fibers boiler house is part of a massive three-building complex that includes the power house and compressor room. After the boiler house implosion, the remaining two smaller buildings will be demolished using conventional track hoe methods. (Photo courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)

Avtex Fibers was declared an EPA Superfund site in 1986. The FMC Corporation, a former owner of the site, is performing overall site cleanup activities in coordination with the EPA and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

"FMC Corporation is proud to be a part of such an impressive collaborative effort with our site partners and the Front Royal community and its leaders," said Marguerite Carpenter, associate director of FMC's environmental department. "We're all working hard to return this once important industrial site to productive use in the new economy for the benefit of the community."

The ongoing USACE work to address environmental hazards is separate from the EPA Superfund site cleanup efforts, under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA). USACE funding to address non-CERCLA items such as asbestos abatement, lead from paint and building demolition was obtained through Congressional appropriations spearheaded by Senator Warner and Congressman Wolf.

"I worked to help ensure that the necessary funding to complete the job was provided by Congress," said Congressman Wolf. "The people of Warren County have been waiting for this cleanup work to be completed and now the largest and one of the last remaining buildings on this site is scheduled to come down next week. This is a historic event for the people of Warren County and I am pleased to have been able to assist at the federal level."

Working in close consultation with its partner-agencies, USACE began its cleanup efforts at Avtex with a comprehensive site assessment investigation in 2000. USACE cleanup process involved four phases: site management planning; asbestos abatement; buildings demolition; and debris removal and recycling. USACE also partnered with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Shenandoah Center for Heritage and the Environment to provide thorough photographic documentation of the historic buildings to be removed, and to support the retrieval and preservation of historically significant items discovered during cleanup. As a fringe benefit of that partnership, USACE and SCHE recovered over $100,000 worth of reusable laboratory glassware which was donated to the Warren County Public Schools' science labs.

To date USACE has demolished 46 site structures and removed or recycled the following items:

- 188 tractor-trailer loads of asbestos-contaminated materials
- 128 drums (55-gallon capacity) of floor sweepings
- 16 drums of material containing polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs)
- 134 boxes of waste fluorescent light tubes
- 6 drums of waste containing Mercury
- 550 truckloads of discarded building equipment, furnishings and miscellaneous debris
- 780 truckloads of steel and other metals disposed of as recycled material for melting and reuse
- 182,500 cubic yards of crushed concrete, stone and brick for beneficial reuse on site (sub-base material for site roadways)
- 17,800 gallons of recovered oil for recycle

The USACE project delivery team (PDT), in developing its site management plan, determined that the Powerhouse complex, which includes the boiler house, would be its final cleanup phase. "Our PDT wanted to ensure that all appropriate safeguards, such as air monitoring, were in place before the implosion of the huge boiler house to protect site workers and the community of Front Royal," said USACE Project Manager Al Opstal. "Also, we wanted to thoroughly examine all environmental actions required for successfully imploding a structure of this size."

"Once the final Powerhouse complex buildings are demolished and their materials properly disposed of or recycled as with the previous structures, and cleanup by FMC is finished and approved by the EPA, the EDA can move forward and integrate that portion of the site into its *Royal Phoenix* development," said Carroll.

"As the cleanup at the Avtex Fibers Superfund site nears completion, Virginians should be pleased that what once was a serious environmental problem is becoming an environmental success story," DEQ Director Robert G. Burnley said. "A significant amount of progress has been made in the past 15 years, and we are looking forward to productive reuse of this site."

For more information on the USACE cleanup efforts at Avtex, contact Project Manager Al Opstal, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Norfolk District, at (757) 201-7536. For more information on *Royal Phoenix*, contact EDA Executive Director, Paul J. Carroll, at (540) 635-2182 or visit the USACE Avtex Fibers web site at www.nao.usace.army.mil/Avtex/welcome.asp or the Avtex Site community home page at www.avtexfibers.com . There will be a 1,500-foot safety zone around the perimeter of the Avtex site. Media will have a reserved area adjacent to the ceremony site for set-up, to include electrical outlet access. Media interviews with guest speakers and site project managers will be available. Site B-roll video and digital stills will be available. For current Avtex site photos, contact Gerald Rogers, USACE Public Affairs, at: gerald.rogers@usace.army.mil

# # #